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PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION FOR STAFF RETENTION  
CHARLESTON COUNTY DSS  
MEDICAID DIVISION

BY

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SC Budget and Control Board  
Office of Human Resources

March 25, 2002

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STATE DOCUMENTS

EXECUTIVE ASK OF  
SHIRLEY  
D. J. P.

The Charleston County Department of Social Services Medicaid Division is experiencing high turnover in staff. From August 2000 to August 2001 twenty-one employees left Medicaid. The average length of stay for this group was 17 months giving us a 28% retention rate. Of the twenty-one employees who left 76% sought employment outside the agency. This turnover has had a tremendous impact on our ability to process work, particularly in the area of our SSI-related Medicaid programs i.e. Nursing Home and Home and Community Based Waivered Services for the elderly and disabled. These programs are the most complex and difficult for new workers to learn. The average training time is 3-6 months.

According to Hazel Parker Assistant Director for Staff Development and Training with DSS, the cost for the two-week training provided by SD&T is \$907.26. (This amount includes the cost for meals, lodging, mileage, and training materials.) Not calculated are the man-hour costs. A new hire in Medicaid earns \$18,530 with total benefit package that comes to \$24,956.08.

One of the performance outcomes established for the Medicaid program is to make timely eligibility determinations. We are not always able to meet this goal with the turnover we are currently experiencing. The average case processing time in the SSI-related program area during August 2000-August 2001 was 57 days. The standard established by the State is 45 days.

The question is what are the best methods to retain staff for the Charleston County DSS Medicaid Division?

## Data Collection

An employee satisfaction survey was completed on all employees in Medicaid to ascertain information regarding the current level of job satisfaction. A review of exit interviews that were available for a period covering January 2000 – September 2000 was also used to gather historical data. Additionally, a survey of the Medicaid Supervisors and a Focus Group, which consisted of current eligibility and administrative support staff, was utilized to obtain further data.

In an article, which appeared in the April 1998 edition of Supervision, entitled “Meeting the challenge of retaining employees. (Managing in the 90s)” by Patricia M. Buhler, she states: “ *There are environmental factors beyond the organizations’ control that can impact turnover rates. Depressed industries, economic cycles, unemployment rates, geographic location and population size can all influence the turnover rate in organizations. Therefore, firms must learn to manage those factors they can control to lower their turnover rates.*”<sup>1</sup> “*To retain employees it must be clearly communicated that the workforce wants them to stay. This begins with a true commitment on the part of the organization to retain employees. The cost of replacing employees is expensive. There is also the non-financial cost of failing to retain employees. Workers will perceive their organization as less loyal and see fewer career opportunities for themselves.*”<sup>2</sup>

The following pages are the findings of data collected and recommendations on ways to decrease turnover in Medicaid.

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<sup>1</sup> Supervision, April 1998 v59 p24

<sup>2</sup> Supervision, April 1998 v59 p 24

## ANALAYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Surveys

#### Exit Interviews:

**Goal:** *To look historically at data collected from employees who have left the program.*

Time frame used Jan-'00 – Sept. '00. Total number of surveys reviewed for this period was ten. Survey questions around the level of satisfaction with supervisors rated 80% satisfied. Questions around advancement opportunities only 20% reported they were satisfied with advancement opportunities. Rate of pay for the job only 10% satisfied. Training they received to do their job 70% were satisfied. Reasons for leaving six left to pursue job opportunities outside the agency. The other reasons for leaving included: returning to school, other jobs, transferred to another county, or no job. (Appendix A-D)

#### Employee Satisfaction Survey:

**Goal:** *To determine the current level of satisfaction of existing employees.* Fifty-five employees surveyed (This includes eligibility workers and administrative support staff.)

83.7% indicate satisfaction with their supervisor, 77.5% were satisfied with the leadership, 73.8% were satisfied with the organizations commitment. 30.5% were satisfied with compensation and benefits, 64% felt there are opportunities for advancement and growth, 83.9% find the work challenging, 71.3% find the organization supportive, overall 69.8% are satisfied with the organization as a whole.

General comments included a strong dissatisfaction with pay for the job. (Appendix E-Q)

**Supervisory Satisfaction Survey:**

**Goal:** *To seek supervisory input regarding the reason for turnover and what could be done to decrease it.* It should be noted: there is not a high turnover rate with our supervisory staff. Eight supervisors were surveyed for the following findings: 62% indicated they felt the organization provided them with opportunities to learn and grow professionally, 87% enjoy their work, 100% felt they received adequate training to do their job and 25% felt the organization provided them opportunities for promotion and advancement. At the supervisory level advancement opportunities for mid and upper management are slim given the numbers of mid and upper level managers there are in our area. (There are only two positions available in our area above a supervisor) When asked what factors influence their decision to remain on the job 87% indicated they stay due to the benefit package and years of service invested in the job. (Appendix R-T)

**Focus Group Survey:**

**Goal:** *To bring a core group of employees together to discuss the results of the employee satisfaction survey and to seek input regarding what factors influence them to stay on the job and what they view as factors for staff turnover.* Eight employees participated in the focus group, years of service ranged from 15 years to 8 months the average years of service 3.78. Five of the participants have college degrees (no advanced degrees) and three did not. (High School graduates) Most of their work experience outside of Medicaid included retail sales and childcare. When asked what factors matter most to them today as it related to their job 100% indicated salary and benefits were most important, 50% indicated helping people, 62% indicated productivity, 25% indicated support from management. Factors they felt influence them to remain on the job (outside of salary)

include: teamwork, knowledge of the job, stability, motivation, and the feeling that they are needed. Factors that attributed to Medicaid's turnover included: there is little room for advancement, stress of workload, constant changes (internal changes with job roles and assignments), no variety (same tasks) being heard and retribution if you are critical of the organization.

Factors that would cause them to remain on the job: include positive feedback from supervisors, pay incentives (step pay plan) smaller workloads, relax some of the administrative requirements (i.e. volume of paperwork) increase opportunities for learning to include incentives for employees to return to school to work on degrees, or opportunities to participate in professional development training, institute a "buddy system" i.e. peer mentoring program for new employees. (Appendix U-X)

Based on the data collected from the surveys it would appear overall employees are generally satisfied with their job and the support they receive from management. Results from the employee satisfaction survey indicate 83.7% of the employees feel supported by supervisors. (see appendix F) Areas of dissatisfaction include advancement opportunities and salaries. In order to decrease employee turnover the following areas need to be developed:

1. A peer-mentoring program for new employees. Identify existing employees who could serve as a mentor for new employees and be available to provide support to new employees who may need on the job "coaching" in order to be successful. A peer mentor would not be a trainer or act in the role of a supervisor but one who could be supportive of a new employee as they adjust to the work and the work

environment. Obstacles to peer mentoring include not having enough existing employees who would be willing to be mentors.

2. A leadership-training track for employees interested in professional development or career advancement. Identify employees who demonstrate through their job performance and a willingness to participate in some professional development training. Presently there is leadership development for new Supervisors. This should be expanded to include front-line caseworkers. Obstacles include a willingness of management and the agency to allow employees to participate in the present curriculum developed for new supervisors.
3. Develop opportunities for employees who wish to return to school to work on advance degrees. Provide flexible work schedules to allow employees to work non-traditional hours and days (i.e. Saturdays) in order to attend classes. Provide financial assistance to help offset the cost of courses if the employee passes the course. Presently agency employees are afforded the opportunity to pursue MSW degrees however they must work in the Human Service field to be considered for this program. Obstacles include funding and the willingness of the organization to support non-traditional work hours.
4. A step pay plan for employees. There must be some means to ensure that employees are afforded an opportunity to increase their salary based on experience and job knowledge. Obstacles continue to be that our Legislature does not provide for this provision in the State Budget. Employees are continuing to remain at minimum pay scales regardless of years of State service. There is not a system that affords employees to be rewarded for years of service. Employees

with a few years of service continue to make no more than a new hire starting off at the minimum pay scale.

5. Develop Career Paths for employees. Allow staff to develop expertise in areas they are interested in, by developing some specific achievement levels that would allow some increase in salary within the employees present pay band, for those employees who develop specific expertise in a designated field. Traditionally career planning has consisted of promotion from one grade level to another, unlike traditional career planning, this type of career development would allow the employee the opportunity to increase their salary within their present pay band, and not feel obligated to necessarily pursue management as a career goal. Obstacles include establishing criteria of what skills an employee would need to obtain to move from one level to the next. Also establishing a dialog within the agency to look at ways to developing a career path for employees. In the article "Meeting the challenge of retaining employees. (Managing in the 90's)" by Patricia M. Buhler she states *"Employees must also be reminded of the value of lateral moves today (versus the older upward career ladder) These lateral moves are the better part of career progression today and enable employees to broaden their skill base."*<sup>3</sup>

### **Proposal**

All of the above are crucial to addressing employee turnover. A long-term goal would be to begin a dialog with upper management to look at ways we might use career pathing to decrease our staff turnover. We will have to become more "creative" in our approach to meeting the needs of employees and create **win-win** situations for both the employee and



the agency. “ *As individual employees recognize their organization is not planning their career, there is less loyalty to the current firm. Employees then begin to look to other organizations to advance their careers.*”<sup>4</sup> “*When management partner with employees in career planning, employees are less likely to leave the organization.*”<sup>4</sup>

Beginning July 1, 2002 our Division will merge with the Department of Health and Human Services. This merger has resulted in further reduction to our existing staff. Presently we have eight employees on staff with less than one year of service. These employees would benefit from a peer-mentoring program. A peer mentor would provide support to new staff during their first year of employment, be a resource to new staff, offer direction whenever needed and most importantly be available to listen and share their own experiences regarding work. The peer mentor would not be expected to replace the supervisor as it relates to the employees job duties, nor act as a mediator between the new employee and the supervisor. As a short-term goal it is proposed that we pursue the development of a peer-mentoring program.

### **Implementation/Evaluation**

Identify existing staff that have at least one-year experience working in Medicaid and are interested in serving as a peer mentor for a new employee. Develop an outline for a formal peer mentoring process. Establish a time frame for the formal mentoring process to end. (Recommendation six month) Solicit buy-in for the program from management and supervisory staff. Evaluate the project at three-month intervals to determine the effectiveness of the relationship between the new employee and the mentor. At the end of

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<sup>3</sup> Supervision, April 1998 v59 p24

<sup>4</sup> Supervision, April 1998 v59 p24

the process evaluate by surveying the employee and the mentor to determine success and areas that could be improved.

It is important that we do all we can to keep our existing staff intact as we transition from DSS to DHHS. *“The challenge of retention is growing. Businesses today can adopt some of the strategies used in the past to ensure more employees are retained. Most importantly, they must be creative in devising strategies to keep their employees. Companies today must create an environment which encourages their employees to choose to remain a member of their organization.”*<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Supervision, April 1998 v59 p24

## REFERENCES

Buhler, Patricia M. (April 1998). *"Meeting the challenge of retaining employees. (Managing in the 90's)"*. Supervision, April 1998 v59 n4 p24.

Employee Satisfaction Survey Results statistically compiled by Dick Grimm of OMNI Systems using Corporate Pulse.

Supervisory Satisfaction Survey, Exit Interview Survey and Focus Group Survey, Results statistically compiled using Lotus Freelance Graphics.

# APPENDICIES

# EXIT INTERVIEW DATA SUMMARY

County exit interviews of ten (10) Medicaid employees from January 2000 through September 2000

**Ratings: 1 = excellent    2 = good    3 = fair    4 = poor    5 = no opinion**

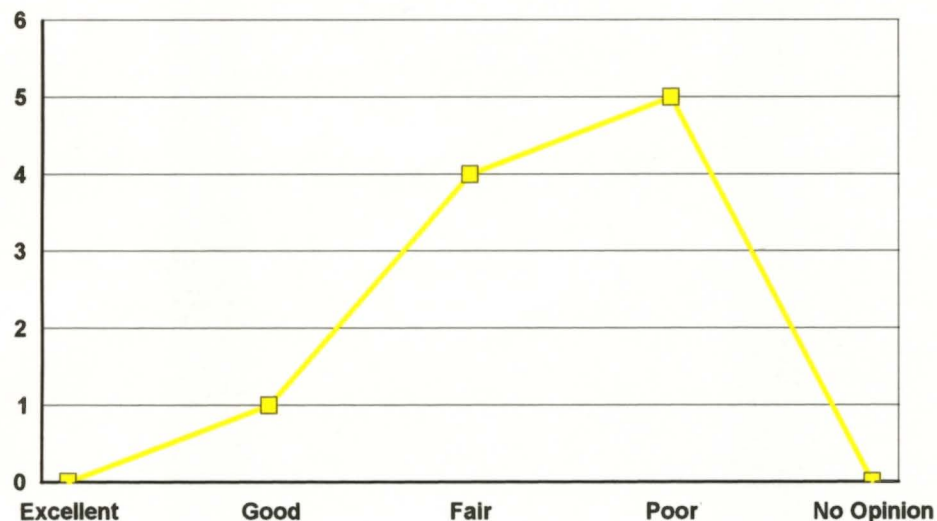
Communication between self & supervisor



Advancement Opportunities



Rate of pay for your job



Agency Training Programs



# EXIT INTERVIEWS DATA Continued

APPENDIX B



x axis = date each interviewee was hired

y axis = years of service

**All interviewees answered yes to the following questions.**

Did you understand the mission of the agency?

Did you ever offer suggestions, relate problems, seek advice or request information from management?  
Was management responsive?

Were you kept informed regarding changes in policies and procedures?

Would you consider returning to work for this agency?

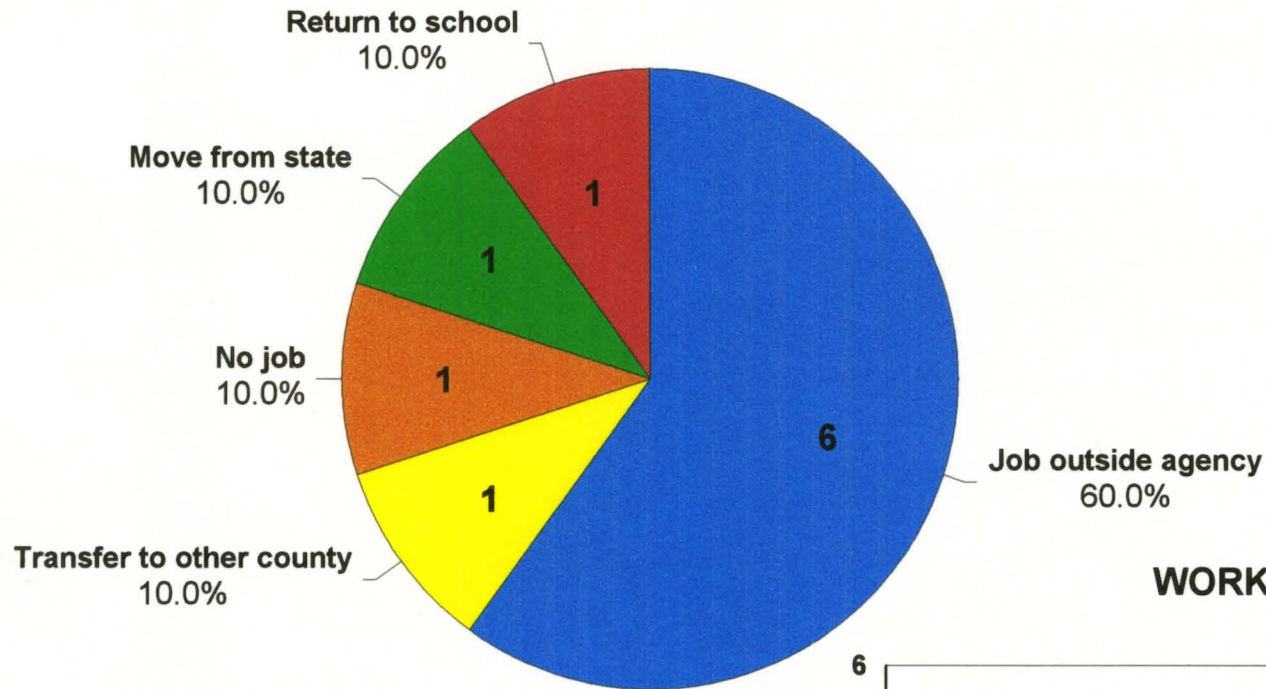
Were the duties and responsibilities of your position clearly explained to you?

Do you feel you received adequate training to perform your job responsibilities?

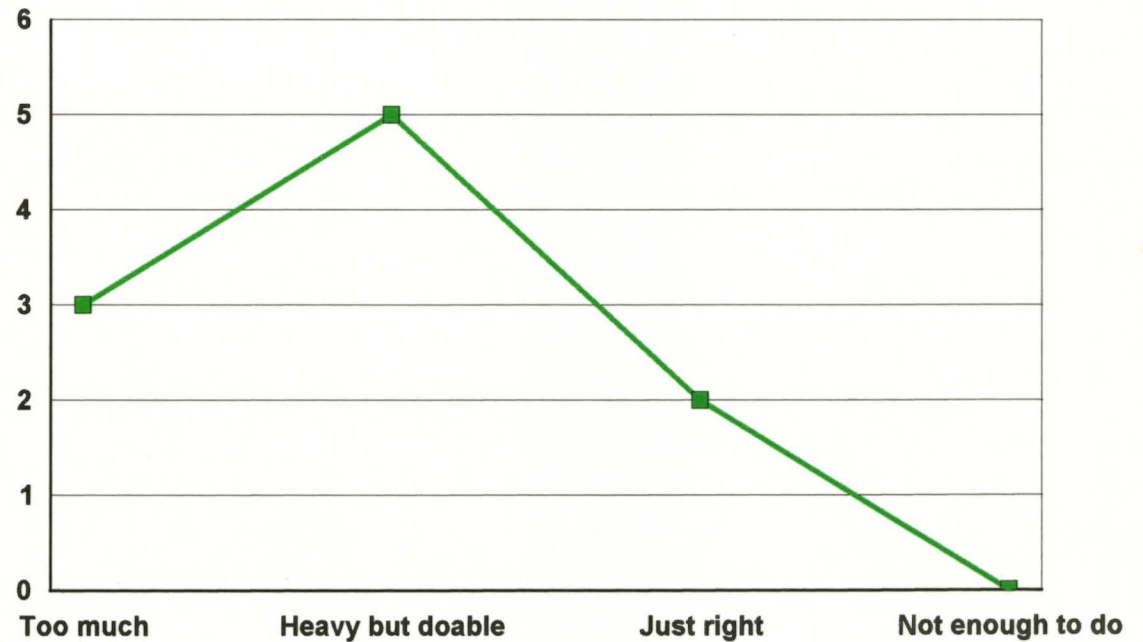
# EXIT INTERVIEWS DATA Continued

APPENDIX C

## REASON FOR LEAVING THE JOB



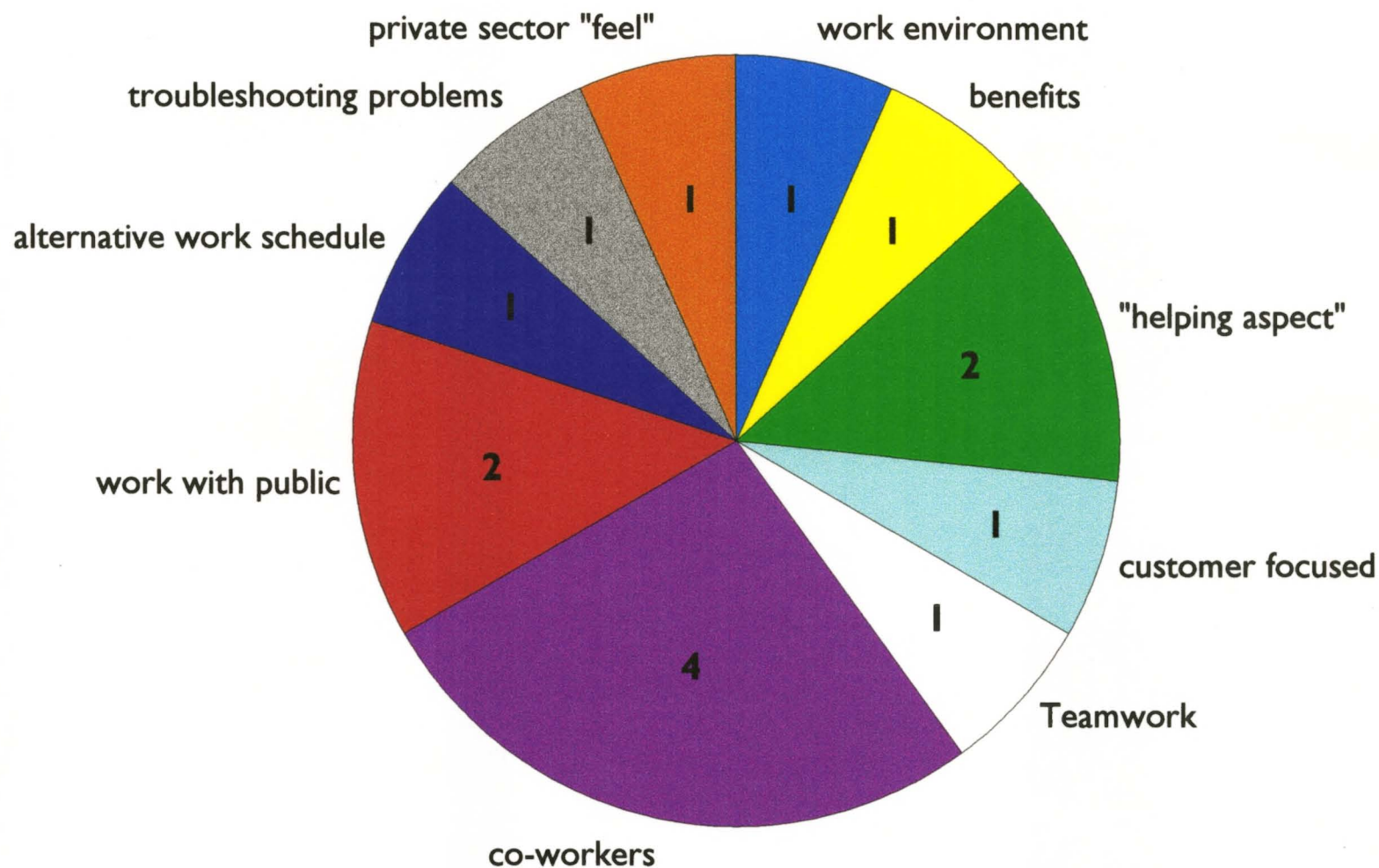
## WORKLOAD DESCRIPTION





# EXIT INTERVIEWS DATA Continued

What did you like about your job and the agency?





# **Favorable/Unfavorable**

**Survey Title:  
Employee Satisfaction Survey**

**Administered To:  
Charleston County  
Nov. 26, 2001**

# Favorable/Unfavorable

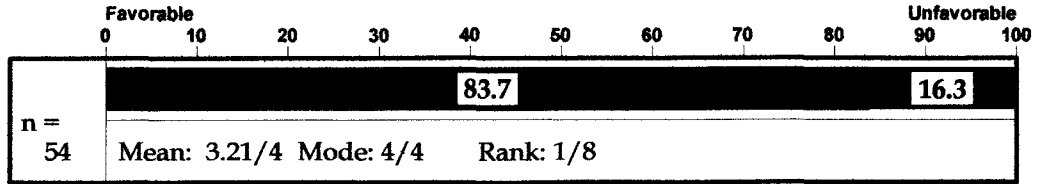
APPENDIX F

Administered To: Charleston County

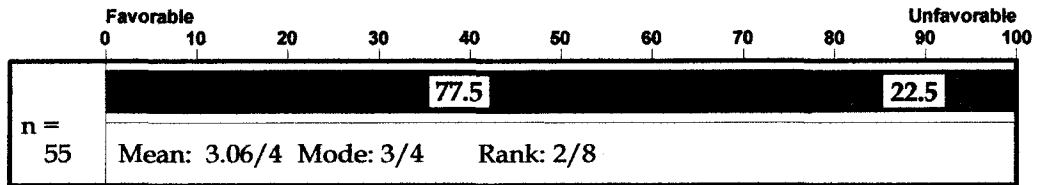
Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

## Category Summary

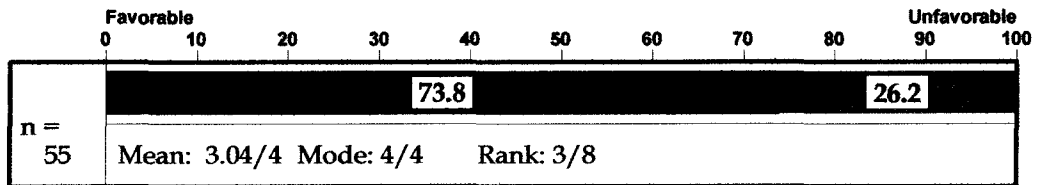
### My Supervisor



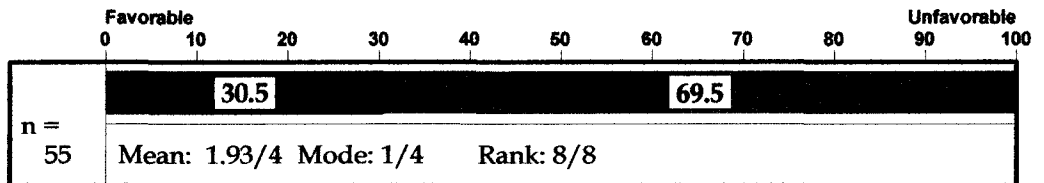
### Leadership



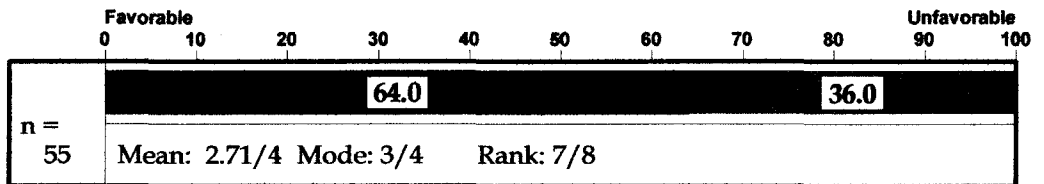
### Organizational Commitment



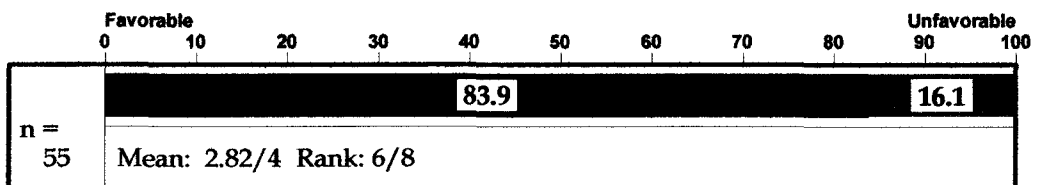
### Compensation/Benefits



### Advancement/Growth



### Challenging Work



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

# Favorable/Unfavorable

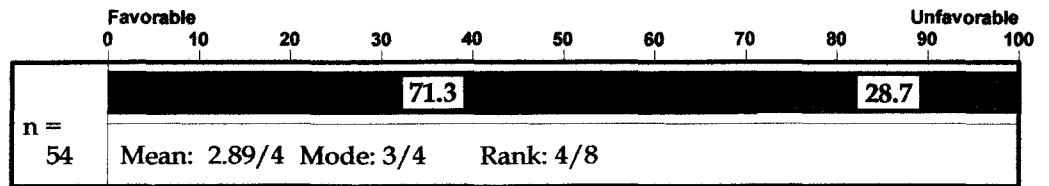
APPENDIX G

Administered To: Charleston County

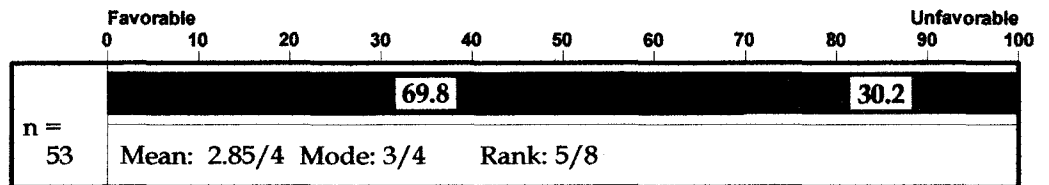
Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

## Category Summary

### Support



### Overall Satisfaction



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

# Favorable/Unfavorable

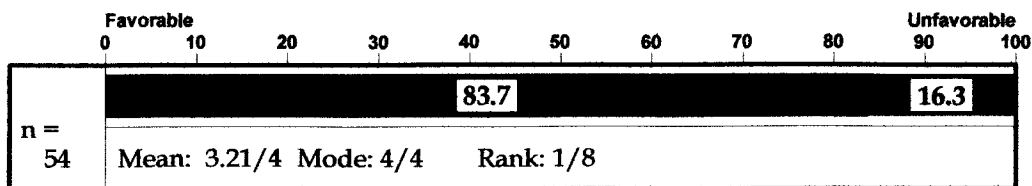
APPENDIX H

Administered To: Charleston County

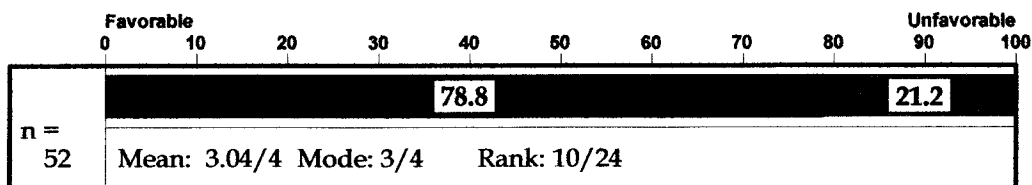
Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

## Main Report Section

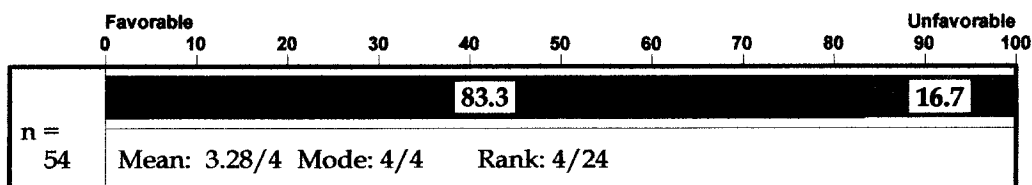
### My Supervisor



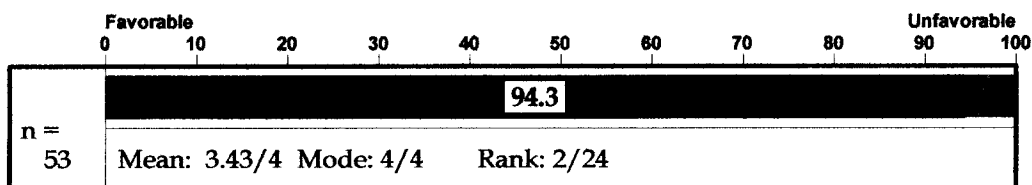
1. My supervisor recognizes contributions that I make to the organization.



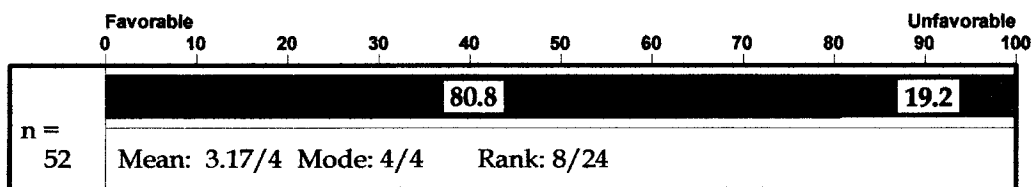
2. My supervisor sets an example for others to follow.



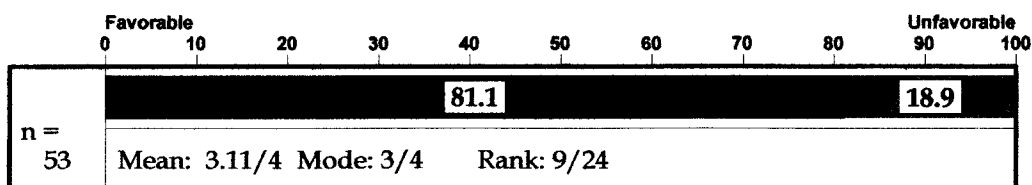
3. My supervisor treats me with dignity and respect.



4. My supervisor gives me useful feedback on my performance.



5. My supervisor gives me timely feedback on my performance.



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

# Favorable/Unfavorable

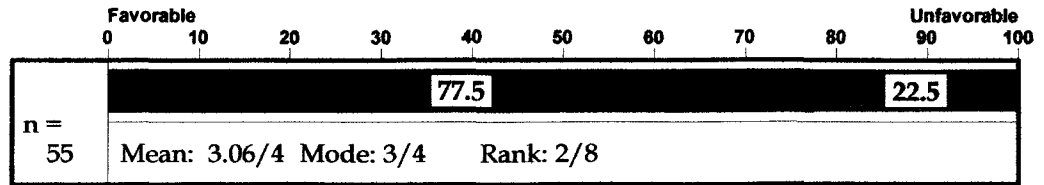
APPENDIX I

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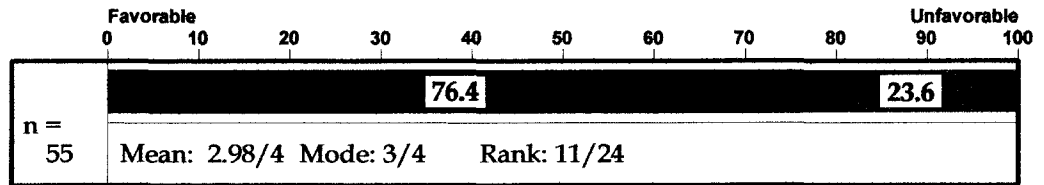
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## Main Report Section

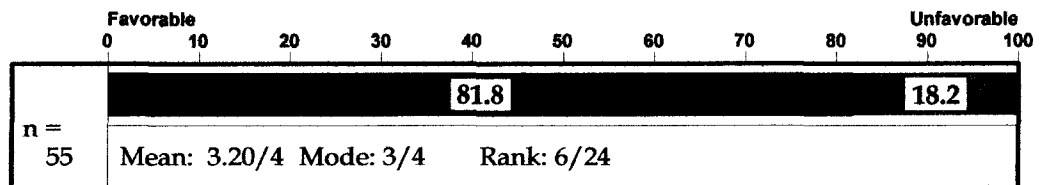
### Leadership



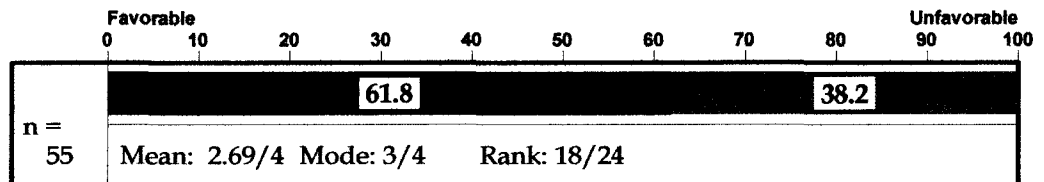
6. The leadership of this organization cares about people.



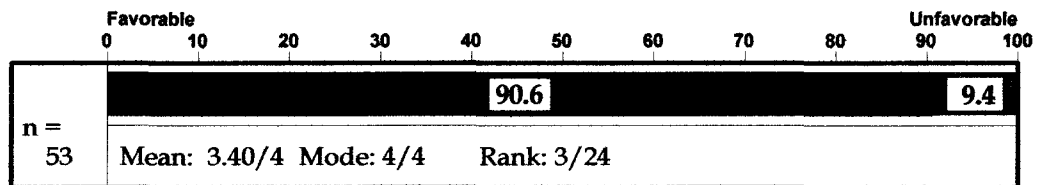
7. The leadership of this organization sets a high standard of performance.



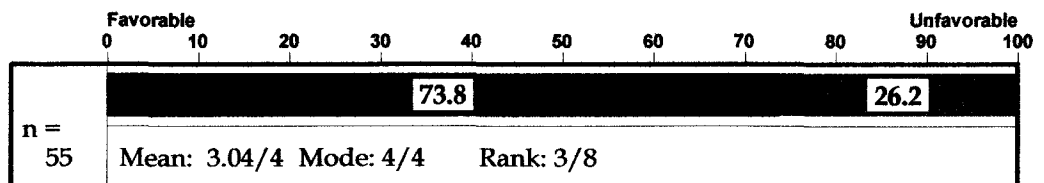
8. The leadership of this organization has created an effective organizational structure.



9. I feel that my work efforts contribute to the mission and goals of the agency.



### Organizational Commitment



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

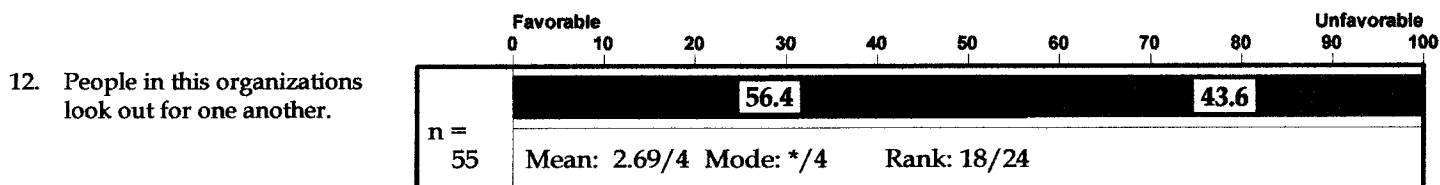
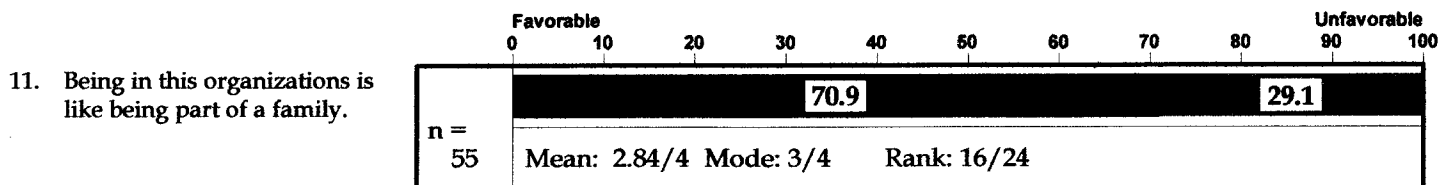
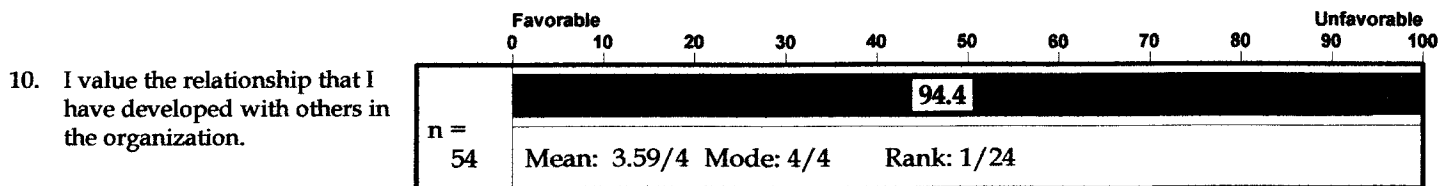
# Favorable/Unfavorable

APPENDIX J

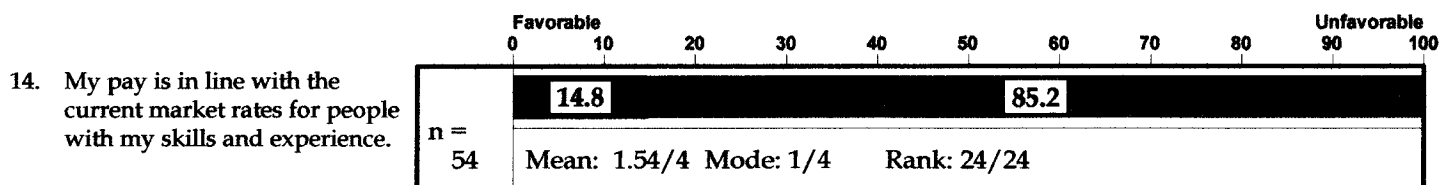
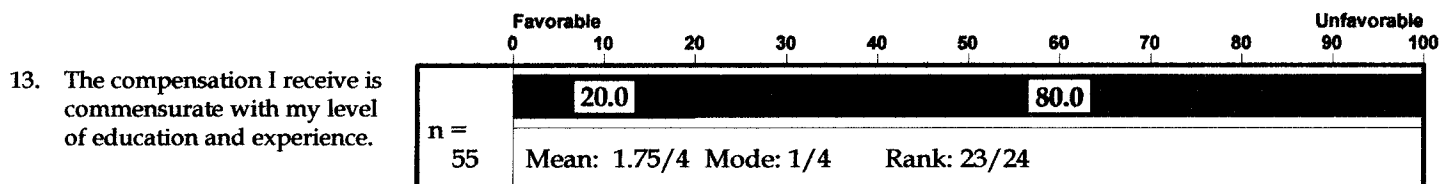
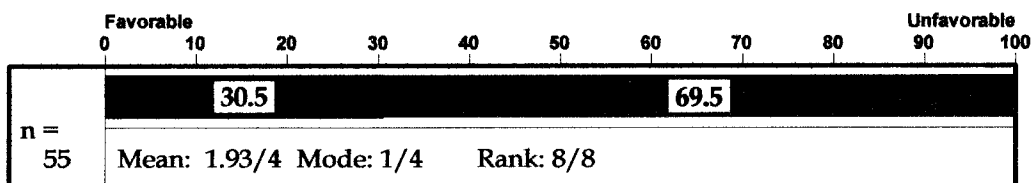
Administered To: Charleston County

Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

## Main Report Section



## Compensation/Benefits



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable\* - more than one mode  
Results reported in a percent scale (R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

# Favorable/Unfavorable

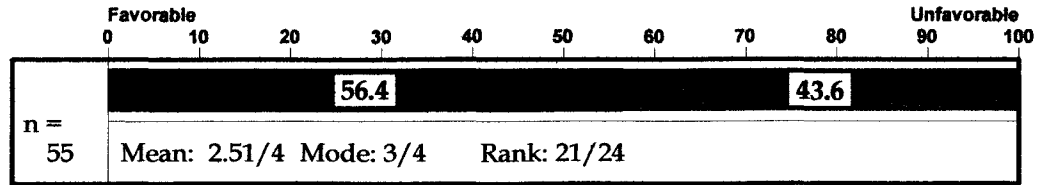
APPENDIX K

Administered To: Charleston County

Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

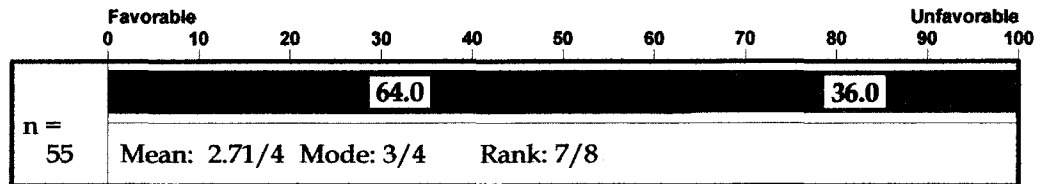
## Main Report Section

15. The benefits I receive are an incentive to remain employed by state government.

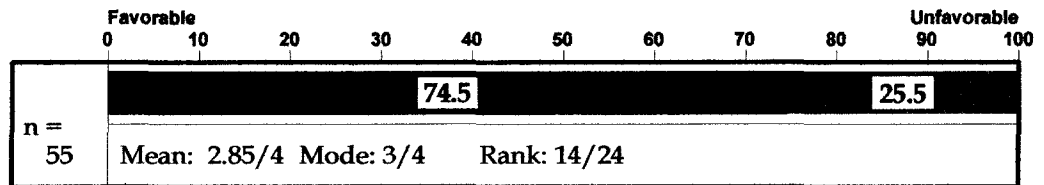


## Advancement/Growth

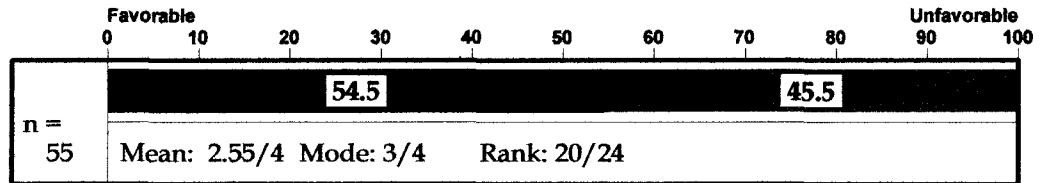
16. My job provides me with an opportunity to learn and grow professionally.



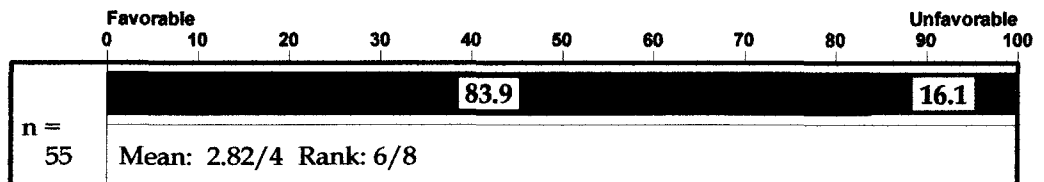
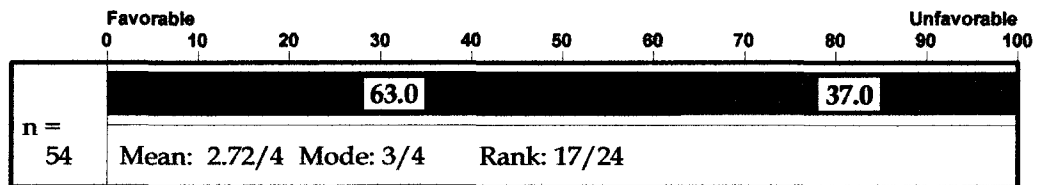
17. This organizations provides opportunities for promotion and/or advancement.



18. I am given adequate training to do my job.



## Challenging Work



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

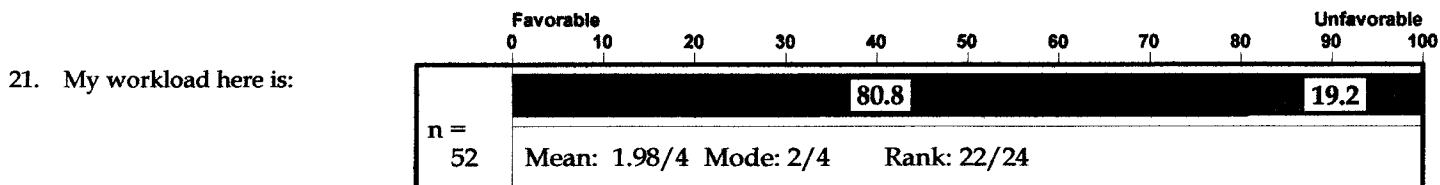
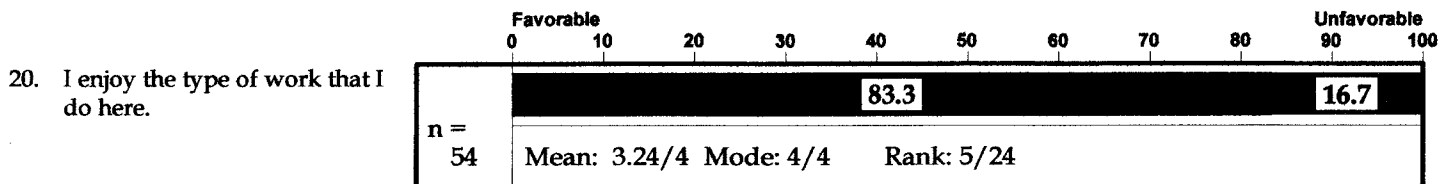
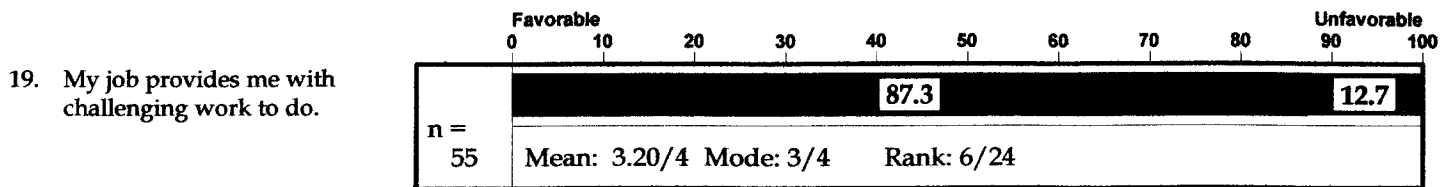
# Favorable/Unfavorable

APPENDIX L

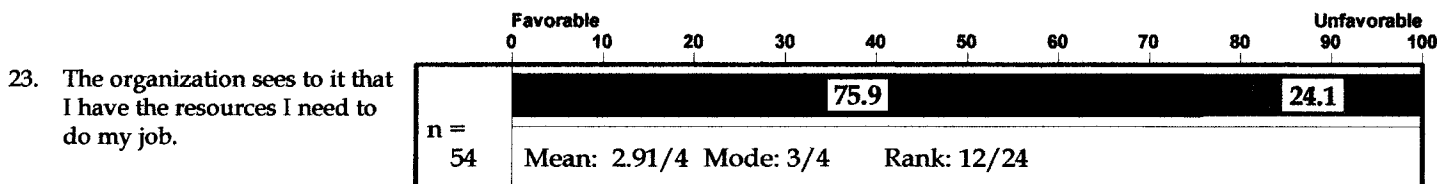
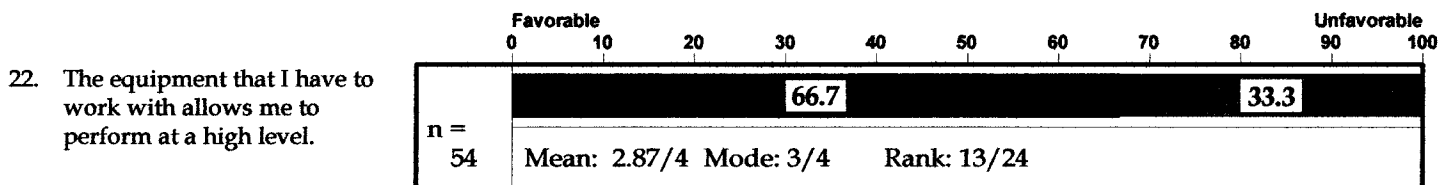
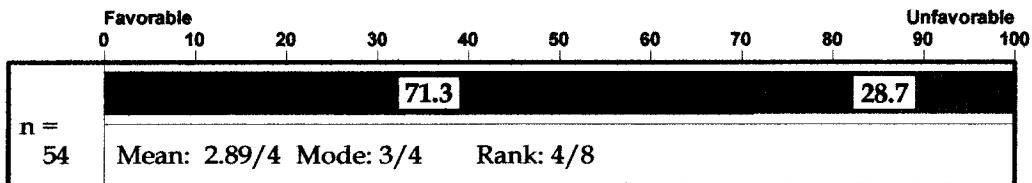
Administered To: Charleston County

Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

## Main Report Section



## Support



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean



# Favorable/Unfavorable

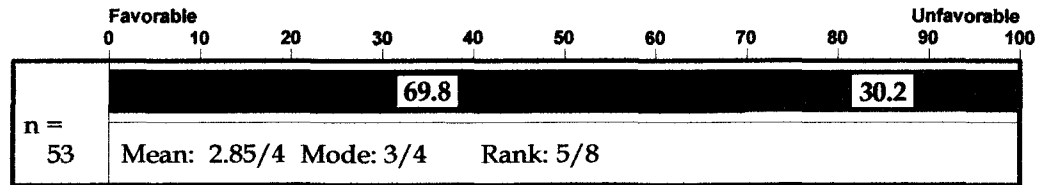
APPENDIX M

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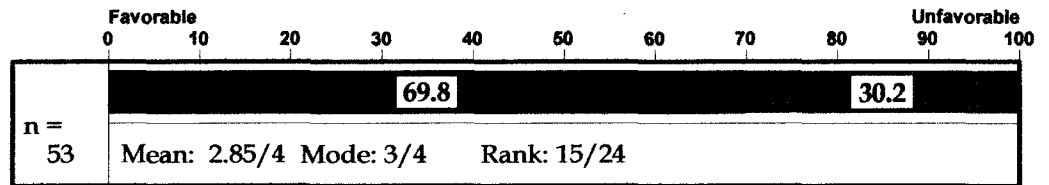
Date Administered: Nov. 26, 2001

## Main Report Section

### Overall Satisfaction



24. What is your overall level of satisfaction with your job?



■ = Favorable □ = Neutral ■ = Unfavorable

Results reported in a percent scale

(R) = Reversed Scoring

Rank based on: Descriptive Mean

**WHAT, IF ANTHING, COULD THE ORGANIZATION DO THAT WOULD MAKE IT MORE LIKELY FOR YOU TO REMAIN?**

- I enjoy my work at intake. The ability to help and assist others is great. Looking forward in being promoted to a III. I welcome a change and a challenge.
- Opportunity for advancement, pay raises, recognition team work, and training opportunities. Supervisors need training (intense) on how to treat employees – stroke employees – recognize employees.
- Decent cost of living raises.
- A better pay.
- Higher pay, better training.
- Better pay, free parking.
- Organization can pay more money, and give less case loads.
- Adequate training – not crash training. Comparable pay for hard work. Direct communication between supervisor and me, not thru third party, incentives recognition of real people who have made differences in life of community as a whole.
- Higher pay rate. More challenging work load.
- Higher pay.
- Better organization skills, as well as treating employee with more respect.
- The most important thing, which i realize that the county has no control over, is salary increases. Many people change jobs to make more money, and that would, more than likely, be the reason for anyone to move on.
- Increase my pay and give me free parking.
- Treat others with respect. Decrease the workload. Increase the pay.
- More money – better pay – higher pay for the work i do: i would stay with the department.
- Nothing, but a pay increase would help.
- Better pay would help, but will stay due to benefits.
- More evaluations, more raises, more responsibilities.
- Continuity of training; availability for lateral transfers with less constraints. Further recognition of individual experience and skills.
- More pay.
- I enjoy the work environment and the skills that i will gain from working here. I enjoy the feeling of helping people and feeling needed. The agency provides services to people from all walks of life that people in the community and state take for granted. Those are the main reasons why I'm here with the agency.
- Some supervisors think that as a caseworker we should know the answers to our questions and are not helpful when questions are asked.
- Certainly more pay and more respect. Clerical to have more training better ways for promotion. Years of service should count for something. I know that you shouldn't be late often, but 2-3 minutes is nothing that reflects on your evaluation. Being recognized more.
- People can adjust to change but medicaid changes too much and too quickly. It does not give people a chance to attempt to adjust. They try to cram everything in so quickly. Also i think employees should be consulted (ask of opinion) before a change

takes place to see how it would affect everyone across the board. Sometimes it seems leadership just quickly try to do things without our opinions. It feels like its done on it sounds good. And the pay of course.

- More pay.
- Raise our salaries, be more flexible with time – such as stop hasseling workers about eating at the desk, break times etc. These are trivial matters compared to our workload and pay scale.
- Raise the pay.
- Pay me more.
- Supervisors should not have “their own way” of doing things! Policy and procedures should be consistent throughout!!! Better training for new workers.
- There’s not much to say. More positive attitudes and willingness to care and not be take with certain things and more challenges for some of us that can use it.
- I truly believed that we are underpaid and I also know that it is hard to have promotion and advancements when you’re controlled by another authority, but it would be nice if they will allow us these opportunities.
- Provide more support/encouragement and more consistency.
- More consistency in the interpretation of policy and in process of job application between all supervisors and “III”s.
- Fairness in treatment of staff and better pay.
- Realizing that people remain where people are happy and contended. Pay plays a very large part in that. Wages need to be upgraded in a serous way.
- I feel that I could handle more of a challenge in my daily duties.

## DOB

- 12-02-37
- 11-07-40
- 1946
- 01-06-47
- 07-20-48
- 06-19-49
- 11-13-54
- 11-25-55
- 02-24-56
- 08-17-57
- 10-18-57
- 01-21-59
- 03-15-63
- 04-29-63
- 04-20-65
- 12-05-65
- 12-18-65
- 10-04-67
- 12-18-68

- 06-23-70
- 07-13-70
- 06-15-73
- 11-01-73
- 1974
- 02-15-74
- 05-22-75
- 11-1975
- 1976
- 05-12-76
- 1977
- 1977
- 01-30-77
- 1978
- 1978
- 08-27-78
- 11-08-78
- 11-02-79
- 08-25
- 12-05

**Job classification**

- Social Service Specialist II
- Admin.
- Admin Support
- Clerical Assistance
- Admin. Specialist
- Admin Specialist
- Admin. Specialist
- Admin Spec. II
- Admin Specialist II
- Admin Spec B
- Admin Spec. B
- Admin Spec B
- Adm. Spec. B
- Admin Spec B
- Admin Spec C
- Specialist II
- Spec. II
- Specialist I
- Spec I
- ESS IIIB
- Economic Service Specialist III
- ESS III
- ESS III
- ESS III

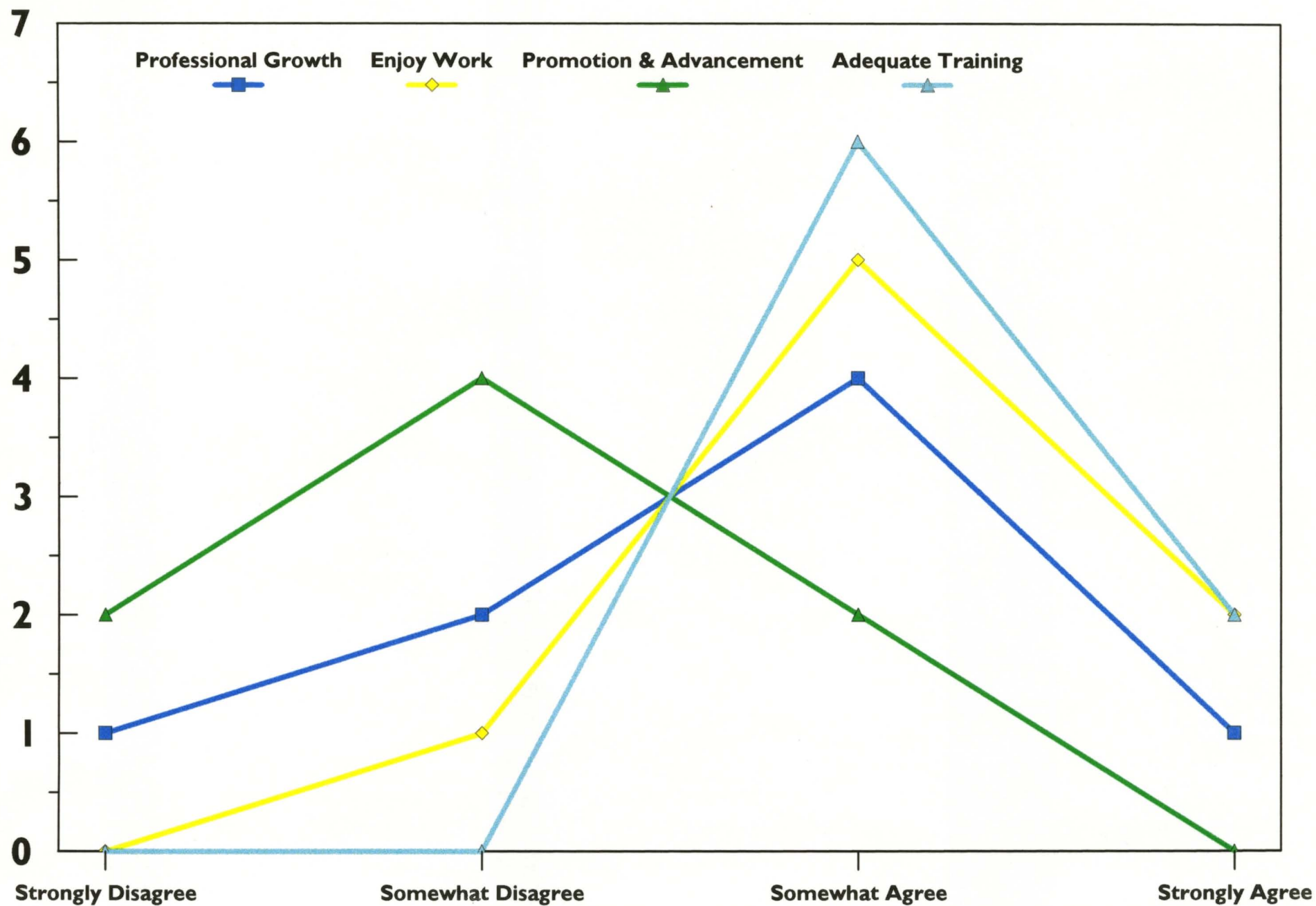
- Economic Service Specialist II
- Economic Service Specialist II
- Economic Service Specialist II
- Economic Services Specialist II
- Economic Specialist II
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- ESS II
- ESS II
- ESS II
- Economic Service Specialist I
- Economic Service Spec. I
- ESS I
- ESS I
- ESS I
- Economic Service Specialist
- EWI
- III

**Additional comments:**

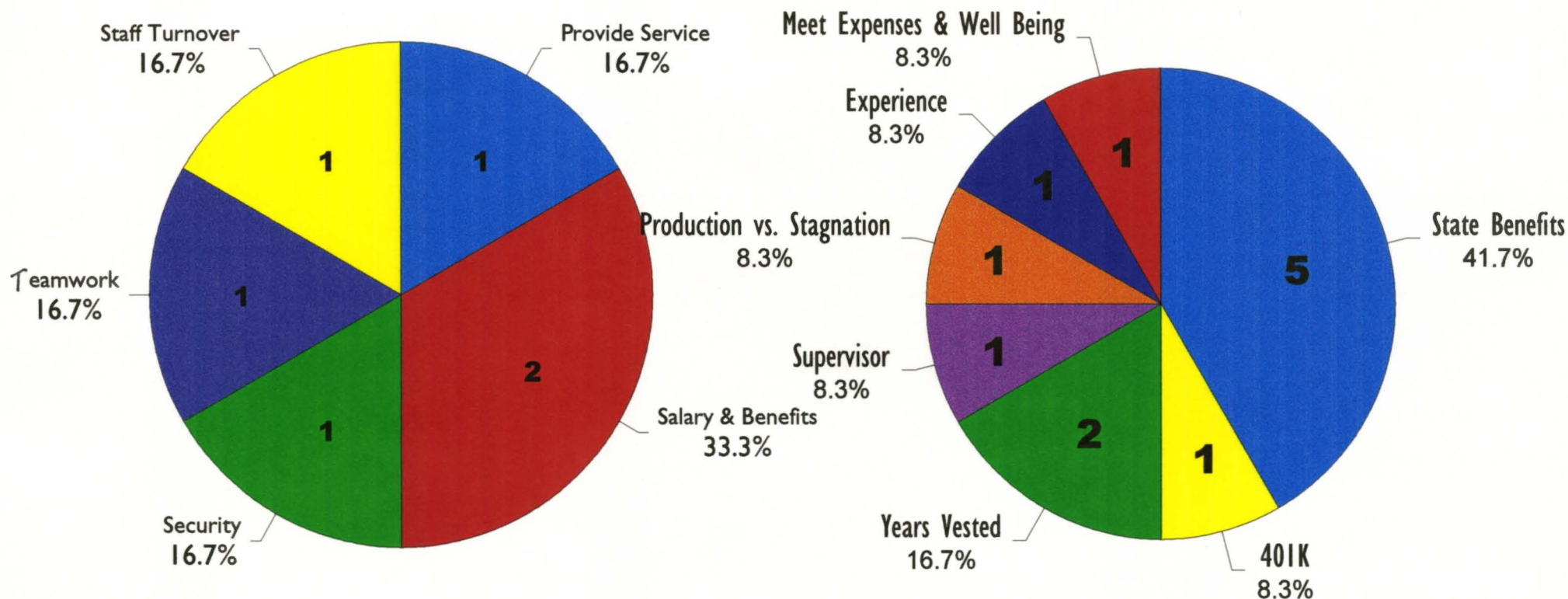
Re: #14 – teachers make more

Re: #15 – only reason

# SUPERVISOR SATISFACTION SURVEY



## SUPERVISOR SATISFACTION SURVEY Continued

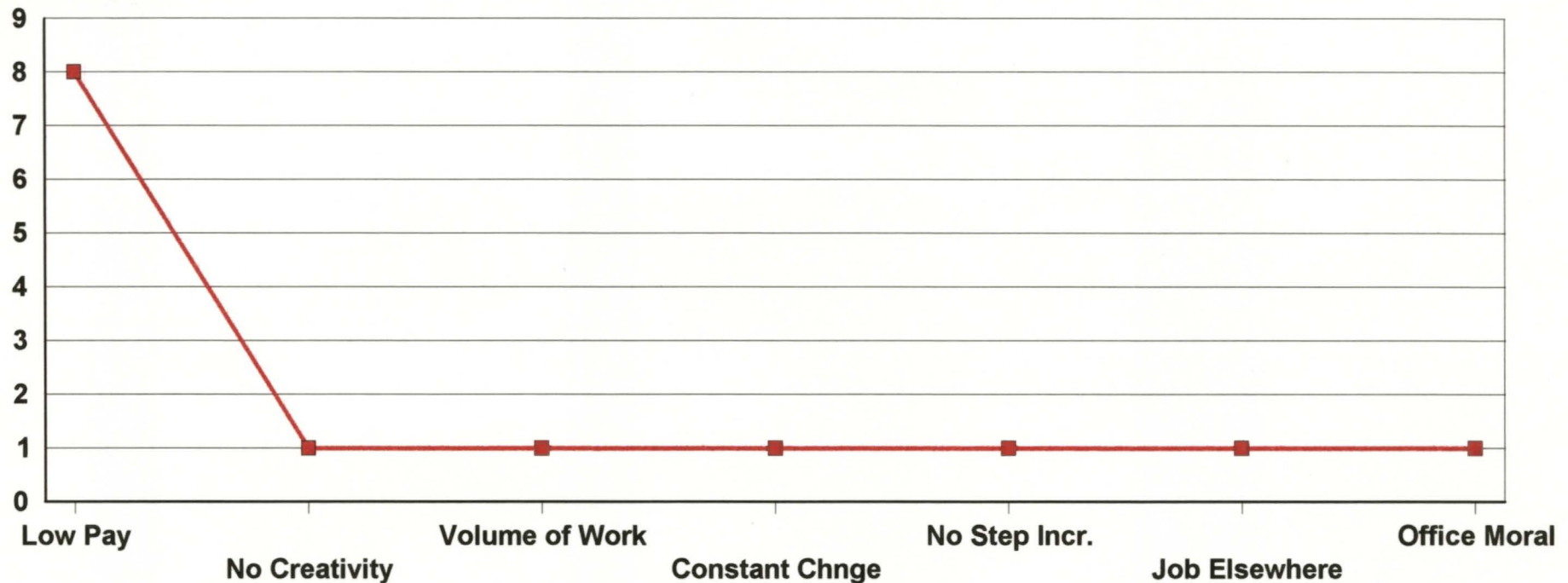


**What matters most to you as it relates to your job?**

**What factors influence your decision to remain on your job?**



## Supervisor Satisfaction Survey Continued

***What do you attribute to staff turnover?***

***Aside from salary increases, what incentives do you think we can offer to decrease employee turnover?***

Hiring employees with personalities to fit job profile
Working environment
Respect for one another
Flextime
Buddy system of internal focus
Developing ways to make the work less tedious
No idea
An incentive plan that would benefit the employee



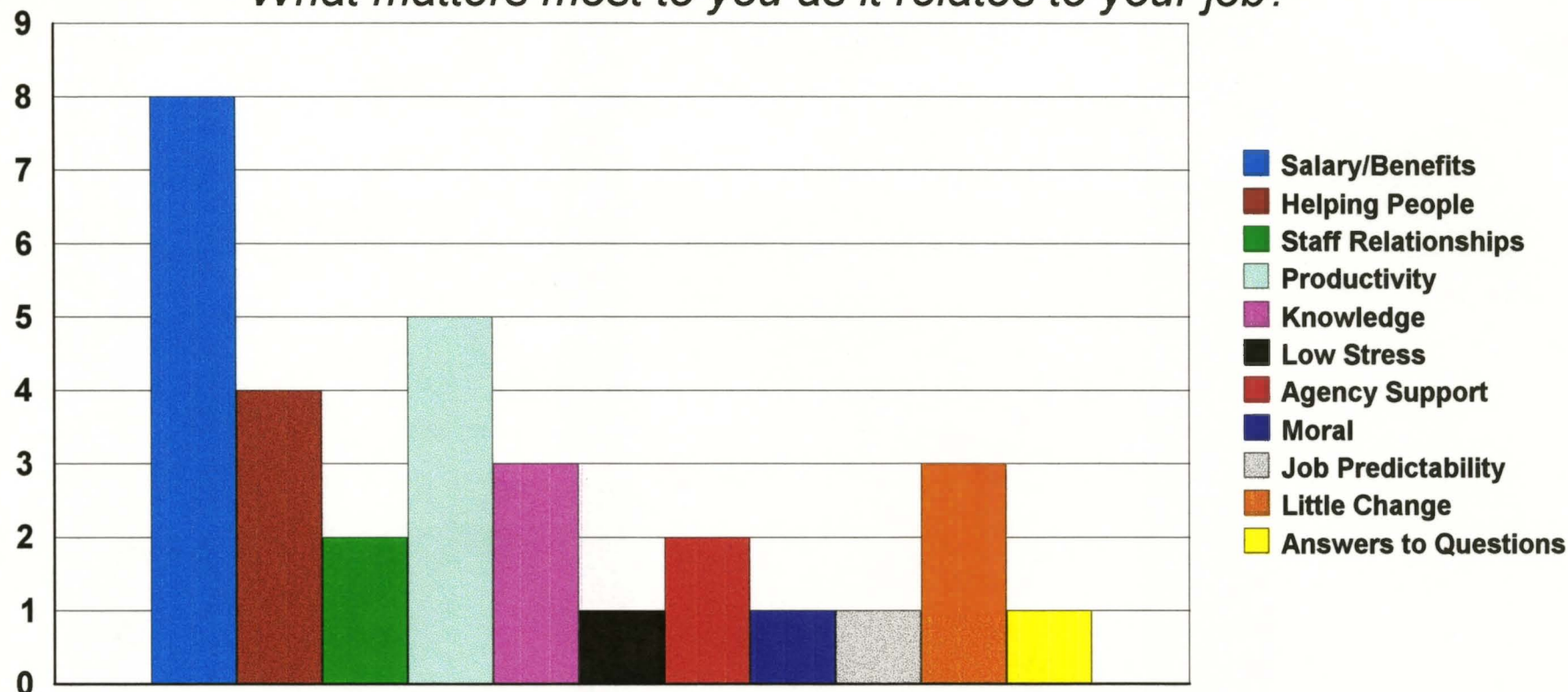
## Focus Group Demographics

Eight (8) participants in focus group held February 25, 2002 from eligibility and support staff

<b>NAME</b>	<b>YEARS OF STATE SERVICE</b>	<b>OTHER WORK BACKGROUND</b>	<b>YEARS OF EDUCATION</b>
Ellen	15	Post & Courier	12
Carol	6	Retail	12
Sally	2	Port Authority	16
Shelite	1	Retail, Library	16
Shawan	1	Retail	16
Endsley	8 mos.	Child Care	16
Marcilla	2	Retail	16
Lori	2.5	Optometrist Assistant	12

# FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

*What matters most to you as it relates to your job?*



*What important factors influence your decision to stay on this job or any job?*

Supervisor's understanding
Reminders that you are needed
Comfortable with what you are doing
Less change
More than half way to retirement
Teamwork
Knowing you job
Stubborn - Know the job and now am vested in it

## FOCUS GROUP DATA CONTINUED

<i>What do you think contributes to staff turnover?</i>	<i>What incentives can we offer to decrease employee turnover?</i>
No room for advancement (supervisors don't leave)	More staff and smaller caseloads
Finding a job with more pay	Social stuff "getting to know you"
Stress of workload	Positive feedback from supervisors
Doesn't offer variety	Feeling special for doing something right
adaptability to constant change	Not being so dealine focused
Lake of input from staff ( <i>refers to changes made without input from staff</i> )	More interaction between program areas
Retribution for criticizing management	Pay for SSI-related work ( <i>more difficult to learn than other Medicaid programs</i> )
Not interested in being a supervisor	

If the agency could offer the following, would you take advantage?

